

CIA PLAN DOES NOT BAR BRIBES, BUSH CONCEDES

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WASHINGTON—President Ford's new intelligence program leaves the door open for covert activities that could include bribery of foreign officials to influence a nation's political system, CIA Director George Bush acknowledged Thursday.

Bush implied that he saw nothing wrong with such tactics and said he saw no need for written guidelines to control the kind of covert activities conducted by intelligence agencies.

Defending Ford's program at a breakfast meeting with reporters, Bush also said that he would "very soon" implement a program the President ordered Wednesday requiring written secrecy oaths by all federal workers and employees of government contractors who have access to classified information.

Bush said he was not sure how many additional thousands of persons would be required to sign the oaths, which have been required of employees of the CIA almost since its establishment in 1947.

The executive order Ford issued Wednesday, which becomes effective March 1, contains stringent secrecy provisions, including expansion of the oath program.

The order, which restricts domestic spying activities by all intelligence agencies except the FBI, prohibits only one kind of covert foreign activity—political assassinations.

Many of the CIA's covert projects have involved pouring funds into political movements and campaigns abroad. Some of the money has been used for bribes, according to congressional investigators.

The House Intelligence Committee reported that a study of covert operations approved by the Forty Committee during the last 10 years showed that 32% of them involved intervention in elections. The committee said it had found considerable evidence that covert actions were "irregularly approved, sloppily implemented, and at times have been forced on a reluctant CIA by the President and his national security adviser."

Bush said he believed the new Operations Advisory Group, which Ford has established to replace the Forty Committee, would provide better control of covert operations.

The operations group also brings Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger back into a policy-making role for covert activities. During the Nixon administration and most of the Ford Administration, Kissinger, as the President's assistant for National Security Affairs, served as chairman of the Forty Committee.

The House Intelligence Committee, which severely criticized Kissinger, reported that he exercised virtual one-man control over the Forty Committee during the Watergate era—late 1972 to late 1974.

Kissinger lost his spot on the Forty Committee last November when Ford named Brent Scowcroft to replace him as national security adviser. Scowcroft had served as Kissinger's top national security deputy.

Kissinger will join the operations group in a reduced role since Ford's executive order named the secretary of state as a member and the national security adviser as chairman. Other members are the secretary of defense, the CIA director and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The attorney general and the director of the Office of Management and Budget were named as observers of the group, to advise and check on legal and budgetary matters.

Bush said he thought that the "more formalized structure" of the operations group, as contrasted with the Forty Committee, "hopefully would ferret out abuses."

Reporters pressed him to say whether he thought the Watergate coverup would have been exposed if all government employees who handle classified material had been under secrecy oaths. He replied that any employee with evidence of wrongdoing could report it to the inspector general and to the new, independent three-member oversight board for intelligence activities named by Ford.

The expanded requirement for secrecy oaths "will not prevent blowing the whistle on wrongdoing," he said. "The machinery is here to prevent the kind of abuses that happened in the past, if you ascribe any credibility to the inspector general and the oversight committee."

Meanwhile, the Senate Government Operations Committee began work on legislation that would create a single Senate panel to oversee the intelligence community.

Sen. Bill Brock (R-Tenn.) argued in favor of creating a joint Senate-House committee—as President Ford has proposed—but this was rejected.